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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

+ UNOSOM II expected to remain at full strength, as troop contributions by Indonesia and Pakistan offset withdrawals by other States; last United States troops leave Somalia today.

+ IAEA Director-General expresses concern about possible plutonium stocks in Democratic People's Republic of Korea, after inspection team refused access at Nyongbyon facility; hopes situation can be resolved through negotiations, without use of sanctions.

+ Head of Secretary-General's special mission to Afghanistan says international community wants to be engaged in peace process, but success will depend on Afghans themselves.

+ Special Envoy for Haiti condemns harassment of International Civilian Mission observers, and Haitian military's failure to take preventive action.

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The United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) is expected to have a troop strength of 19,225 by the end of May -- the limit recommended by the Secretary-General -- and will continue to carry out its mission, according to a United Nations spokesman. Noting that the United States contingent had completed its withdrawal from Somalia today, he said the Operation's current troop strength was 19,098.

Saudi Arabia, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates would also withdraw troops from Somalia next month, but they were expected to be replaced by additional forces from Indonesia and Pakistan, the spokesman added.

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The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Hans Blix, yesterday expressed concern about the amount of plutonium the Democratic People's Republic of Korea might have, and whether it was producing more. He told correspondents at Headquarters that IAEA inspectors had

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recently been refused permission to fully inspect a radiochemical laboratory at Nyongbyon, and thus could not determine if it had been used to separate plutonium from spent nuclear fuel. He made those comments after briefing the Security Council earlier in the day.

Mr. Blix noted that the IAEA had never said that the People's Republic was actually producing nuclear weapons. The Agency was concerned about the issue of plutonium, which was a crucial element in the production of such weapons. He said that the IAEA had concluded a clear-cut inspection agreement with the People's Republic in Vienna last month, and that there were no good reasons for the lack of cooperation at Nyongbyon. He added that while the situation was serious, he hoped it could be resolved through negotiations, without recourse to sanctions.

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The head of the Secretary-General's special mission to Afghanistan, Mahmoud Mestiri, today reiterated that the international community was dedicated to promoting a peace process in that country. However, he told correspondents in Geneva the international community could not resolve the situation -- success would depend on the Afghans themselves. The Secretary-General appointed the mission last week to seek the views of a broad spectrum of Afghan leaders on how the United Nations can best aid national reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Mr. Mestiri, who will leave tomorrow for Islamabad, said he had already met in New York with representatives of the Government of Afghanistan and other Afghan personalities, and with representatives of the United States, the Russian Federation, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia -- the "Friends of Afghanistan." There appeared to be a consensus that the special mission should try to reestablish a political process in the country. It might transform itself into a mission of negotiation if a rapprochement could be achieved, he continued, although the immediate task was to establish the facts and to let the parties express their positions publicly.

The Afghan people had had enough of war, and it was clear that no one party could achieve victory through force of arms, Mr. Mestiri went on to say. He noted that the reestablishment of a stable and independent Afghanistan was in the interests of other countries in the region.

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The Special Envoy of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of America States for Haiti, Dante Caputo, today stongly condemned the harassment of observers from the International Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH). He said a small group of observers visiting the town of Hinche on Wednesday had been harrassed by civilians who appeared to be members of the Front Révolutionnaire pour l'avancement et le progrès haïtien (FRAPH). Mr. Caputo said he was particularly outraged as Haitian military personnel had been present at the time and had done nothing to prevent those "serious incidents."

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